

THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



FOUNDED 1917

CALIFORNIA
ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

FEB 27 2008

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Doug Greenberg

Doug Greenberg photographed this duck on Lake Merritt during the 2007 Oakland CBC. Originally discovered by Bob Battagin in May 2004 as an immature bird, it was later identified as a probable male Hooded Merganser x Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid.

Oakland Christmas Count Tally Hits 180 Species

Fine weather and enthusiastic birders produced excellent results on Oakland's 67th annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC), held December 16, 2007. Led by 3 a.m. owlers, 171 birders set off by sunrise on foot and by canoe, golf cart, and automobile to identify and count every bird they could find in Oakland's 15-mile-diameter count circle. Another 16 birders scanned their backyards and contributed important numbers of common species, as well as one of the count's rarer birds: a Hermit Warbler. At dusk, 100 birders gathered at the countdown dinner to enjoy Left Coast Catering's fine food and to regale one another with stories of a great day in the field.

Participants tallied 101,000 individual birds, 35,000 fewer than last year, but about the same as our recent 10-year average. Last year's high numbers of scaup, Buffleheads, Double-crested Cormorants, and gulls did not carry over, as numbers of all those species returned to near their averages of recent years.

On count day we found 180 species, three more than our recent average. Our best bird was a Cassin's Vireo, the first ever for the count, found on Bay Farm Island. Birders located Red-naped Sapsuckers near Briones Dam and in Tilden Regional Park—only the second year since 1974 for this species. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in

OAKLAND COUNT continued on page 11

Bird Safety and Wind Energy

For the past year, Golden Gate Audubon has been at the leading edge of efforts to reduce the impacts of wind-energy production on bird populations. The historic settlement agreement we made with Alameda County, the wind companies operating at Altamont Pass, and four other Bay Area Audubon chapters has set the pace for these efforts, committing the companies to reduce the egregious bird kill at Altamont Pass by half by November 2009 and to work with Audubon to create a comprehensive conservation plan to protect birds in the region for the long term. Our settlement agreement constitutes the strongest protections for birds in the more than 20 years that wind turbines have been present at Altamont.

Unfortunately, the companies' performance over the past few months has raised serious concerns about their intent to meet the requirements of the settlement agreement. The companies failed to remove high-risk turbines by a March 2007 deadline and declined to implement the recommendations of Alameda County's Scientific Review Committee (SRC) to reduce raptor kill. As a result, the companies, Alameda County, Golden Gate Audubon, and Californians for Renewable Energy (CARE) are now in legal mediation in an effort to get the companies back on track.

In September 2007, the SRC members stated

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Society Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office in Berkeley.

The Gull is published nine times per year by the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The deadline for submissions is five weeks prior to the month of publication. Special third-class postage paid in Oakland, CA. Send address changes to office promptly. The post office does not forward The Gull.

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Leaving a Legacy for Wildlife

Miles McKey, past president and longtime supporter of Golden Gate Audubon, can pinpoint exactly when he became interested in birding. “I was in a summer cabin in the Poconos in Pennsylvania,” he recalls, “and I remember looking out the bathroom window and seeing two brilliant blue birds fluttering around in the blackberries. I watched them throughout the summer and was just fascinated by them. My relatives later gave me a field guide, and I discovered that they were Indigo Buntings. That was July 1956.”

He has been birding ever since.

Miles and his wife, Mary Ellen (Mel), have been Golden Gate Audubon members for more than 30 years. Miles founded the Panama Committee (now Golden Gate Audubon’s Latin America Committee) after attending the Audubon Western Regional Conference in 1994. He later joined the board of directors and served as president from 2002 to 2005—a period of significant organizational growth and program expansion. Mel has been a dedicated Golden Gate Audubon volunteer for the past six years, coming in nearly every week to lend critical help in the office.

In addition to their generous volunteer service, Miles and Mel have chosen to include Golden Gate Audubon in their estate planning. “The Bay Area is such a unique ecological area, and needs to be preserved from development threats and habitat loss,” Mel says. “Golden Gate Audubon does good work on these issues and we want to see it continue, so we’ve chosen to include Golden Gate Audubon in our planned giving.”

“We think Golden Gate Audubon has a lot of potential and lots of talent and knowledge,” Miles adds. “We share the organization’s goals and feel an obligation to support the causes we believe in. So we’re leaving Golden Gate Audubon something for the future.”

Including Golden Gate Audubon in your estate planning is an extremely effective way to help conserve Bay Area birds and other wildlife and their habitats—both now and for future generations. “A planned gift of any size is a legacy that *anyone* can leave for our community,” notes Elizabeth Murdock, Golden Gate Audubon’s executive director. “A bequest to Golden Gate Audubon helps ensure that the beauty and biodiversity of the Bay Area will continue to thrive for generations to come.”

“It’s also a way to fund experimental projects or special initiatives,” Miles adds. “Foundations and other funders are sometimes wary of providing seed money for new conservation initiatives. But if an organization has received bequests that can fund new and innovative projects, and then these projects are successful, foundations are more willing to support them in the future. We like to support these projects—especially in education—and help Golden Gate Audubon stay at the forefront of effective conservation.”

Retired since 1990, Miles and Mel are active birders as well as Golden Gate Audubon volunteers—just recently they returned from a birding and natural history trip to the Mekong River. Miles grew up in Berkeley, left for school and work in Massachusetts and Florida, and returned to the Bay Area in 1975. He joined Massachusetts Audubon in the mid-1950s and has been an Audubon member ever since. Mel grew up birding with her parents, who were longtime Audubon members. She joined Audubon shortly after she moved to Berkeley in 1966.



Miles and Mel McKey, accompanied by a guide, on a birding trip to the Yucatán.

LEGACY continued on page 4



CONSERVATION CORNER

RICHMOND SHORELINE CENSUS— A STATUS REPORT

In September 2007, Golden Gate Audubon began a one-year census of the birdlife along the North Richmond shoreline. The study, conducted in cooperation with the National Heritage Institute, is focused on shorebirds and waterfowl that make use of the basin between Point Pinole and Wildcat Creek. Although access is limited, we are trying to develop a baseline for evaluating the impact of future development and conservation activities.

During the fall quarter (September through November), we completed 12 censuses in each of four areas. About 75 Golden Gate Audubon staff and volunteers have been involved in these studies, counting birds and learning more about the shoreline habitat. Counters noted gulls, waterbirds such as herons and egrets, and raptors, as well as shorebirds and waterfowl. Results so far show that an average of 12,400 birds were seen each census day. This total includes 6,600 waterfowl and 3,100 shorebirds.

The following were the most common species along the shoreline: Scaup (Greater and Lesser), Western Gull, Willet, American Avocet, Least Sandpiper, Marbled Godwit, Dunlin, Ring-billed Gull, California Gull, and Mallard.

Six species found so far along the shoreline are on the 2007 Audubon WatchList of species that are declining or rare, and therefore are of national conservation concern. These "yellow listed" birds are Clark's Grebe, California Clapper Rail, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Black Turnstone, and Western Sandpiper. The California Clapper Rail is also on the state's list of



Clark's Grebe.



Long-billed Curlew.

threatened and endangered species.

As we continue the census project, we'll get a better idea of which areas are most critical to roosting shorebirds and what species make most use of the four different census areas. We'll also get a better picture of the ebb and flow of bird populations through the calendar year.

We welcome new participants in this project. If you are interested in volunteering for the census, contact Jennifer Robinson, Volunteer Coordinator, 510.843.2222 or jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org.

—Bob Lewis, Education Committee

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS

Saturday, March 1, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Native plant propagation for Pier 94 and community garden work, followed at 1 p.m. by a barbecue hosted by Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ). Bring a food item to grill. Meet at the LEJ nursery, 1150 Carroll Ave., San Francisco.

Saturday, March 8, 9 a.m. – noon

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at the Presidio. Meet at the playground picnic tables at Quail Commons at the corner of Battery Caulfield and Washington Boulevard, San Francisco.

Sunday, March 9, 9 a.m. – noon

This is the last Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge workday before the California Least Terns return to the refuge. Come help us prepare the terns' nesting grounds. Meet at the main refuge gate at the northwest corner of former Alameda Naval Air Station, Alameda. **Note:** Volunteers must be 18 years and older.

Saturday, March 22, 9 a.m. – noon

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at Harding Park.

Meet at the parking lot at the corner of Sunset Blvd. and Lake Merced Blvd.

For more information on any of these activities or events, or for directions to any of the sites, please contact Jennifer Robinson, Golden Gate Audubon volunteer coordinator, at jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org.

2008 GGNRA ENDANGERED SPECIES BIG YEAR

Join the race against time to participate in the Big Year by seeing the 33 endangered and threatened species found within the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, while taking 33 discrete conservation recovery actions that will prevent these species from going extinct. March may be your month to tick some of species off your list. Check out the calendar at www.ggnrbigyear.org/calendar.html to see when you will have a chance to restore habitat for the endangered Mission Blue butterfly and the endangered San Bruno Elfín Butterfly; find out about the latest attempts to propagate the last Presidio Manzanita; restore Northern Spotted Owl habitat; hike to see the Bay Checkerspot Butterfly; and restore habitat for the San Francisco Garter Snake and see California Red-legged Frogs.

Record Number of Birders Turn Out for San Francisco CBC

Setting out in clear weather and continuing through a cloudy afternoon, 114 birders covered 16 land areas and one area from a boat on December 27, 2007, for the annual San Francisco Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Another four birders counted at feeders.

Altogether, they found 169 species and 55,731 individual birds. Three additional species were reported during the count week. The species total and overall bird count are within the range we consider normal for the north peninsula.

It's hard to say this is good news, but nothing was reported to suggest lasting impacts from the November *Cosco Busan* oil spill. Only 10 gulls showing oil smudges were reported. Western Snowy Plovers seem to be holding their own, with a total of 33. Good numbers of Surfbird and Black Turnstone were found as well. These were three species we thought might be in trouble after the oil spill. On the other hand, we had only 111 Sanderlings, a historic low for this species whose numbers vary widely from year to year.

At least two significant birding spots in the count circle were inaccessible. The Sunset Reservoir, where large numbers of Killdeer and Black-bellied Plovers often roost, was not productive because the roof was under construction. The San Francisco Zoo was closed due to a tiger attack on December 25 during which one person was killed. The zoo did not reopen during the count period.

American Bittern, Wandering Tattler, Western Screech-Owl, and Loggerhead Shrike, all appearing to be recently extirpated from our CBC area, were missing again this year. Ruddy Turnstone, California Quail, Wrentit, and Spotted Towhee continue to appear on the brink of extirpation.



Harlequin Duck at Heron's Head Park in San Francisco, one of the rare birds found on CBC day.

All scoter and scaup numbers were down significantly from the period when we started the San Francisco CBC in 1983. American Wigeon and Canvasback were down as well.

Corvids continue to do well on the north peninsula. The Common Raven count was up from 518 last year to a new record of 564. Crows dipped slightly from last year's 334 to 295. Steller's Jay numbers jumped to a record 44. Until recently this species was considered a rare bird in San Francisco.

We did manage to get two new species for the city count: Eurasian Collared-Dove and Yellow-billed Magpie. Both have been residents for several years, but we've always

managed to miss them not only on previous count days, but during count weeks as well.

The excitement of finding rare birds was shared by most count groups on CBC day. Our list includes Blue-winged Teal, Harlequin Duck, Long-tailed Duck, Northern Fulmar, Common Moorhen, Ancient Murrelet, White-throated Swift, Rock Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Palm Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, American Redstart, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

You can find the totals for this and all Christmas Bird Counts for 2007–08, along with all the historical data, at the National Audubon Society website: www.audubon.org/bird/cbc. Follow the links to "Current Year's Results" or to "Historical Results."

The 114 birders we had in the field were a record for our count, but the four feeder counters at three feeders were not. As always, we would like to encourage birders with backyard feeders or habitats to join our count. A yard count can be done in as little as 15 to 30 minutes.

Mark your calendar for the 2008 San Francisco Christmas Bird Count, on Tuesday, December 30.

—Dan Murphy and Alan Hopkins, co-compilers



Photographer Lee Karney was among the birders who found these Western Snowy Plovers at Ocean Beach during the San Francisco CBC.

LEGACY from page 2

Golden Gate Audubon thanks Miles and Mel for their generous support—and for leaving a conservation legacy for the future of the Bay Area.

—Michael C. Martin

Supporting Golden Gate Audubon Through a Planned Gift

Planned gifts have played a critical role in enabling Golden Gate Audubon to preserve special places and protect local wildlife over the past 90 years. If you are interested in leaving a legacy for Bay Area wildlife, contact our office at 510.843.2222.



SPEAKER SERIES

SARAH REED

COORDINATOR

Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m.

Ecology and Conservation of the Seabirds of Alcatraz Island

Melissa Pitkin

Berkeley: Thursday, March 20

San Francisco: Tuesday, March 25

The 1.4 million people who visit Alcatraz Island each year are largely unaware that the island offers special opportunities to view colonies of nesting seabirds up close. People can watch marine birds tending nests and raising chicks on the island without having to take a rigorous boat trip. Hundreds of Brandt's Cormorants, Pelagic Cormorants, and Western Gulls nest on the cliffs below the public areas, and the island's trees support small colonies of Snowy Egrets and Black-crowned Night-Herons. Melissa Pitkin will give an overview of the findings from PRBO Conservation Science's long-term research on Alcatraz Island, including some of the conservation threats and solutions for San Francisco Bay seabirds. Her presentation will emphasize how to prevent disturbances to nesting birds from human activities, such as boating, fishing, and kayaking.

Melissa has worked for PRBO Conservation Science since 1997 both as a field biologist and as the director of PRBO's Education and Outreach Program. As director, she develops and implements projects that focus on translating the science of bird and ecosystem conservation to a wide variety of audiences.

Berkeley: Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin).

Directions: www.northbrae.org/directions.htm

San Francisco: County Fair Building, SF Botanical Garden, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way.

Directions: www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html



Sara Acosta

Displaying Brandt's Cormorant on a nest at Alcatraz Island.

Are You a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon?

Last month you probably received a notice to renew your Supporting Membership to Golden Gate Audubon. If you've renewed already, great! Renewing your Supporting Membership early in the calendar year ensures that you won't miss a single issue of *The Gull* and will continue to enjoy all the Supporting Member benefits, including a 10 percent discount on items purchased at our Nature Store, discounts on birding and other classes, priority registration for selected field trips, and the satisfaction of helping local conservation efforts.

If you haven't renewed your Supporting Membership yet, please do so soon. Your direct support of Golden Gate Audubon allows us to continue our vital conservation and education programs right here in the Bay Area—all while keeping administrative expenses to a minimum.

If you haven't been a Supporting Member in the past, we encourage you to join. Being a Bay Area member of the National Audubon does not automatically enroll you as a Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Member. Although we are a chapter of National Audubon, we are an independent organization with our own budget and membership. All of our activities, including field trips, Speaker Series, and environmental education programs, depend on the generosity of our Supporting Members, whose dues directly fund our local efforts.

Our new Wildlife Guardians monthly giving program makes being a Supporting Member easier than ever. With a modest monthly pledge of \$10 or more charged automatically to your credit card, you can join Golden Gate Audubon's Wildlife Guardians and have a major impact on our work to protect Bay Area wildlife and

habitats. Whether you pledge \$10 or \$50 or \$100 per month, as a Wildlife Guardian you will know that your contributions are giving *direct support* to the protection of our local bird and wildlife resources—each and every month. Plus, as a Wildlife Guardian you'll enjoy all the great benefits of Supporting Membership.

All contributions to Golden Gate Audubon are tax-deductible and will be used to support our conservation, education, and birding programs.


To become a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon or to renew your membership for 2008, just fill out the form you recently received in the mail and send it to the Golden Gate Audubon office. You can also join or renew online at www.goldengateaudubon.org or by calling the office at 510.843.2222. Please join or renew today!



FIELD TRIPS

PAM BELCHAMBER, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee

 Biking trip

For questions about individual field trips, contact the leaders. If you cannot reach a leader, contact Pam Belchamber at 510.549.2839. Field trips are also listed on the Golden Gate Audubon website at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturday, March 1, 10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis, SF Nature Education; Darin Dawson, SF Botanical Garden docent, 415.387.9160, www.sfnature.org

Meet at front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Cosponsored by Botanical Garden, SF Nature Education, and Golden Gate Audubon.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sunday, March 2, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net; Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

Meet at front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This monthly trip is oriented toward helping beginning birders develop their skills in spotting and identifying birds.

Jewel Lake in Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Friday, March 7, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156, philajane6@yahoo.com

Meet at parking lot at north end of Central Park Dr. for a 1-mile stroll through this lush riparian area. Early March is a time of transition with winter birds still in residence and breeding birds beginning to sing. Willows and flowering currant should be in bloom. Come prepared for muddy paths. Heavy rain cancels.

Upper San Leandro Reservoir

Contra Costa County

Friday, March 7, 8 – 11:30 a.m.

John Brenneman, 510.531.1239, kokorourke@sbcglobal.net

We'll walk a wooded trail of the Upper

San Leandro Reservoir from the Valle Vista Staging Area to look for typical winter residents, a selection of raptors, and spring migrants with some prelude to nesting likely. Rain cancels.

From Oakland take Redwood Rd, turn left on Pinehurst Rd., and then right on Canyon Rd. Go .5 mile to parking lot and trailhead on right.

Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Sunday, March 9, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Della Dash, 510.558.1907, birdingal@yahoo.com

Meet at parking lot at north end of Central Park Dr. for a 4-mile moderately strenuous hike up to ridge (500-foot elevation gain) to take in wintering birds throughout the park. We'll hike in a loop, ascending the hills through lush riparian areas. From the top of the ridge, we'll enjoy a 360-degree view and have a picnic (bring lunch). We'll proceed down other side of hills through a more open area to parking lot. Be prepared for muddy paths and heavy winds. Heavy rain cancels.

Albany Mudflats

Sunday, March 9, 9:45 a.m. – noon

Oliver James, 510.524.7093, oliverjames91@gmail.com

Meet at raised platform located on access road to Albany Bulb. Park along road at westernmost end of Buchanan St. on west side of I-80. We'll scan the mud and bulb for a mix of water and land species. Bring a scope if you have one.

Arrowhead Marsh

Oakland

Monday, March 10, 9:30 a.m. – noon

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001, bob@wingbeats.org

Arrowhead Marsh at Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline is noted for Clapper Rails, Sora, and Virginia Rails. The tide

will be low, so we will look for shorebirds, landbirds, and ducks.

From I-880 in Oakland, exit at Hegenberger Rd. and head west. Turn right on Pardee, then left on Swan and right into park. Continue to parking lot at end of road.

Point Pinole Regional Park

Richmond

Saturday, March 15, 9:30 a.m. – noon

Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001, bob@wingbeats.org

We will leave on the 9:30 a.m. shuttle to the fishing pier—so don't be late!—where we will look for shorebirds. We'll walk back along a wooded trail searching for passerines.

From Hwy. 580 north toward Richmond, take Richmond Expressway/Point Richmond exit and continue north to Giant Hwy. Exit toward Giant Hwy. and turn right on Giant. Turn left at Atlas Rd. into park. Meet in parking lot. \$

Presidio

San Francisco

Sunday, March 16, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Matt Zlatunich; David Armstrong, darmstrong99@yahoo.com (email preferred), 425.584.6650.

Meet at parking lot near former public health hospital just north of 15th Ave. and Lake St. We will walk 7–8 miles, visiting the diverse habitats of the Presidio. Bring water and lunch.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Friday, March 21, 8 – 10 a.m.

Charles Hibbard; Lewis Ellingham; Brian Fitch; Margaret Goodale, mgoodale@randallmuseum.org, 415.554.9600 ext. 16

Meet in front of Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. We will enjoy views of the city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring hilltop scrub and south cliff.

Point Isabel

Richmond

Sunday March 23, 9:45 a.m. – noon

Oliver James, 510.524.7093,

oliverjames91@gmail.com

Meet at end of Rydin Rd. at Point Isabel for 1.5 mile round trip along Bay Trail on paved, flat ground. Open water, salt marsh and coastal brush habitat. Bring scope if you have one.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Oakland

Wednesday, March 26, 9:30 a.m. – noon

Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066,

hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey,

510.528.2093, ruthtobey@earthlink.net

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. We will bird around there, then go up garden path toward Children's Fairyland or walk down lake toward Embarcadero. The nesting season should be going strong, and with any luck the Double-breasted Cormorants will have their crests on display.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into park on Perkins. Best parking at boathouse lot near spherical cage. Entry (via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland) is free on weekdays.

Upper San Leandro Reservoir

Contra Costa County

Friday, March 28, 8 – 11:30 a.m.

John Brenneman, 510.531.1239,

kokorourke@sbcglobal.net

We'll walk a wooded trail of the Upper San Leandro Reservoir from the Valley Vista Staging Area to look for typical winter residents, a selection of raptors, and spring migrants with some prelude to nesting likely. Rain cancels.

From Oakland take Redwood Rd, turn left on Pinehurst Rd., and then right on Canyon Rd. Go .5 mile to parking lot and trailhead on right.

Marsh Creek Regional Trail

Eastern Contra Costa County

Saturday, March 29, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Kathy and Blair Jarrett,

Kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com, 510.547.1233

Meet at intersection of Fetzer and Jordan Lanes in Oakley. Each year, nearly half of the waterfowl and shorebirds migrating along the Pacific Flyway pass through the Delta. This paved trail has views of freshwater marsh and is an excellent place to see many species. Bring a snack, lunch, water, sunscreen, and binoculars. Dress in lay-

Napa River Birding Cruise

Sunday, April 27, 9:45 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353, davequady@att.net

If you've always wanted to see and bird the Napa River, this is your opportunity. The *Delphinus* will leave from Vallejo Marina promptly at 10 a.m. to take advantage of the low tide. The tide will be falling, and the birds should be great. Bring lunch and appropriate clothing. *Trip is limited to 30 participants.* Cost is \$80 for Golden Gate Audubon members and \$90 for nonmembers. Reserve by contacting Kirsten Bunting at the Golden Gate Audubon office, 510-843-2222 or ggaa@goldengate-audubon.org. Payment must be received by March 28 to reserve your space.

From East Bay, take Hwy. 80 east toward Sacramento. Cross Carquinez Bridge (\$4 toll), stay in right lanes, exit at Sonoma Blvd., and continue in left lane until Curtola Pkwy. intersection (stoplight), then jog left onto Mare Island Way. Go past Vallejo Ferry Terminal and turn left at stoplight onto Harbor Way. Turn left into first driveway and park. A crew member will meet you at gate for "K" dock. (If you reach harbor master's office, you've gone too far.)

ers. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels.

Call or email leaders to get cell number. If you have room in your vehicle for an extra bicycle or if you need a ride, contact leaders at earliest opportunity.

Take Hwy. 4 east toward Stockton/Pittsburg and then Hwy. 4 exit toward Brentwood/Stockton (instead of Hwy. 160 over Antioch Bridge). Go .3 mile and turn right on Main St. (Hwy. 4). Continue 2.2 miles, turn left on Vintage Pkwy., go .4 mi, turn right on Walnut Meadows Dr., go .2 mi, turn left on Fetzer Ct., and then right on Fetzer Lane. Go .2 mi and stop at trailhead at intersection of Fetzer Lane and Jordan Lane. Leaders will not take public transit, but if you plan to do so, email or call in advance to get directions from Amtrak Station in Antioch or Pittsburg/Baypoint BART Station. Antioch is 7.3 miles from trailhead, and BART is over 15 miles.

Honey Lake

Lassen County

Saturday – Sunday, March 29 – 30

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,

davequady@att.net

Spaces may still be available on this trip to search for Greater Sage-Grouse and other Eastern Sierra birds. Contact leader for availability.

Golden Gate Park

San Francisco

Sunday March 30, 8 a.m.

Harry Fuller, anzatowhee@yahoo.com

Meet at the north end of North Lake near 45th Ave. and Fulton to check out west end of park for spring migrants and nesting birds—during Harry Fuller's brief visit to Bay Area.

American River Trail

Sacramento to Folsom

Friday – Saturday, April 11 – 12

Kathy and Blair Jarrett,

Kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com, 510.547.1233

On Friday we'll leave from Emeryville Amtrak station for Sacramento. Many birds can be seen from the train, especially through Suisun Marsh. After arriving, we'll bicycle to Folsom and stay the night. On Saturday we'll bicycle back to Sacramento and take the train home. You can also drive to Sacramento/Folsom and meet us there, or you can join us for a one-day trip on Saturday, meeting us at 8:30 a.m. at Iron Point Light Rail Station in Folsom. The 23-mile American River Trail is rich in birdlife, and the trail is fairly flat. Recent riding experience is a must to ensure the stamina necessary for such a long ride. *Trip is limited to 12 people; advance reservations are necessary.* Call or email Kathy Jarrett.

Mines Road

Livermore

Saturday, May 3, 8 a.m.

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,

davequady@att.net

This all-day trip will begin in Livermore and finish there in the early evening, with opportunities to end earlier. We can expect to see Lewis's Woodpecker, Phainopepla, and Bullock's Oriole. Wild Turkey, Greater Roadrunner, and Golden Eagle are among other possibilities. Bring

FIELD TRIPS continued on page 8

food and liquids. Trip is limited to first 20 participants who sign up with leader beginning April 14. Carpooling is encouraged to/from Livermore and is essential during the day due to limited parking along route. Leader will provide directions and carpooling information to those confirmed on trip.

Yosemite National Park

Friday – Sunday, May 30 – June 1

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353,
davequady@att.net

Space may still be available on this extended trip to see the rich birdlife of Yosemite National Park. Contact leader for information on availability.

Member Nominations to the Board of Directors

Golden Gate Audubon will have two slots open for elected members of the board of directors, with terms beginning on June 16, 2008. Member petitions for nominations must be submitted to the GGA office by March 17, 2008, for the board election to be held on June 15, 2008. Petitions must be signed by a minimum of 100 (maximum of 500) members in good standing, and must include a written agreement by the nominated candidate to serve. Names of candidates will be published in the May 2008 Gull, along with ballot forms for members to fill out and send in by June 16. If you wish to submit a petition, call Elizabeth Murdock at 510.843.9912.

Mark Earth Day with Golden Gate Audubon

Join us on April 19 to celebrate Earth Day at Pier 94! Volunteers will enhance the habitat by weeding, cleaning up trash, and planting—and be rewarded with scrumptious treats. Look for details in the April Gull.

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

GOLDEN EAGLE (\$1000 AND MORE)

Anonymous, Mary Bachman & William Downing, Bob Bennett and Elizabeth Shih, Marjorie & Bill Blackwell, Susan & Kevin Consey, Coventry Health Care, Harold C. Kirker, Allan Ridley & Helen McKenna Ridley

PEREGRINE FALCON (\$500 TO \$999)

Anne Cahill, Barbara F. Dengler, Dr. Alan Harper & Dr. Carol Baird, Pansy Kwong, Shiela A. & Laurence E. Malone, Audre W. & Roger Newman (*Eco-Oakland Environmental Education Program*), Barbara & Al Peters, Regina Phelps (*Cosco Busan Oil Spill*)

LEAST TERN (\$200 TO \$499)

Lesley Benn, Virginia & George Bing, Susan & Ron Briggs, Mary G. Burke, Leora & Coleman Feeney, Maryl Folly & Arianna Comyns, Marie H. & Obie G. Gilkerson, Dorothy D. Gregor, Rebecca Jackrel, Carol M. & Stephen Lombardi, Johanna & Robert M. Mandrel, Dr. Roger B. Mendelson, Elizabeth Murdock & Paul R. Cort, Hortensia & John S. Nelson, Jennifer E. Ott, George S. Peyton & Lani Rumboa, Rudolph L. Pipa, Don Reinberg, Joyce & Jim Schnobrich, Franklin Silver, Elizabeth Sojourner, Inge Svoboda, Delia Barnes-Taylor & Prof. John Waldo Taylor, Yulling Tsai, Sarah S. Wilson, Leona G. Wilson

CLAPPER RAIL (\$100 TO \$199)

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IN KIND

Kristen Bunting (*Christmas Bird Count book donation*)

IN HONOR OF

Susan Witter: In honor of Mrs. Charles Lowrey and Ms. Ann Witter (*Eco-Oakland Environmental Education Program*)

Monique Ninove: In honor of her mother

GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Judy Irving & Mark Bitner: Courtenay & Jordan Irving

Rebecca Weavergill: Nga Nguyen

Rita Schaulat: Joann & Scott Brew

Stephanie Landry: Beth Jordan

Kaoru Reynolds: Steve & Jeanne Tanamachi

Sheila C. Diehl: Franklyn Silva

IN MEMORY OF

Betsey Hopping: Marian E. Hopping



Winter highlights included flood tides, CBCs, Big Year kick-offs, and rare visitors from the north.

LOONS TO DUCKS

On Jan. 20, a Northern Fulmar made a rare foray inside the Bay as far as Oyster Pt. in S. SF, SM (RT). A juvenile male Magnificent Frigatebird was blown into a conifer near the Russian River Bridge crossing on Highway 101, SON, during the storms of Jan. 5 (CK, fide BB; oob). It was rescued and taken to the IBRRC in Cordelia for rehabilitation and release back into the wild. An Emperor Goose (*Chen canagica*) made the highlight reel from the Pt. Reyes Peninsula CBC on Dec. 15 (fide SC).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

On Jan. 20–21, the high tides at Arrowhead Marsh at Martin Luther King Jr. RS, ALA, flushed a bedraggled Yellow Rail into view (BP; mob). On Jan. 7, canoeists on Ellis Cr., Petaluma, SON, were rewarded for their efforts with 3 Black Rails (PC, oob). A Rock Sandpiper returned to the reef below Half Moon Bay Golf Course, SM, beginning Dec. 2 (GD; JR, PM). A couple Red Phalaropes were reported from the Crystal Springs CBC along the SM coast on Dec. 15 (fide ADM), and 3 were blown into Pillar Pt. Harbor, SM, by the Jan. 4 storms (AJ; RT).

An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) and a probable Slaty-backed Gull (*Larus schistisagus*) were ID'd at Salt ponds A11 and A14, SCL, on Dec. 16. The Lesser Black-backed was refound on Jan. 13 (MRo, SR; MM, RJ, MRo). A New Year's Eve ocean watch from Ocean Boulevard, SM, spotted a Black-legged Kittiwake near shore (RT). Ancient Murrelets were noted off the SF and SM coasts Dec. 27 and 28 (JC, JMo).

DOVES TO THRASHERS

Owls on the Dec. 16 Santa Rosa CBC contributed a Spotted Owl record from Los Alamos Rd., SON (RR). The Long-eared Owl at Ed Levin CP, SCL, remained



This Yellow Rail at Oakland's Arrowhead Marsh drew dozens of birders in late January.

Dave Quady

through Jan. 18 (AE). Three Long-eared Owls were located in the conifers on Ryer Island, SOL, on Jan. 1 (RM).

Five Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported from 4 counties, and Red-naped Sapsuckers made the CBC lists for Pt. Reyes Peninsula (MRN) and Oakland (ALA). Pt. Reyes Peninsula CBC also contributed a Hammond's Flycatcher sighting along Bear Valley Rd. Beginning Dec. 12, an Eastern Phoebe was observed in a ravine on San Bruno Mountain, SM, where it remained at least a month (DM; mob). The Tropical Kingbird that has overwintered at the Winton Ave. entrance to Hayward RS, ALA, became scarce after Jan. 13. A 1st winter Northern Shrike turned up at Shollenberger Park in Petaluma, SON, on Dec. 14 (PL, PC, oob).

A Plumbeous Vireo surprised Oakland CBC counters in south Fremont (KH0; JL). Both Oakland and Pt. Reyes Peninsula CBCs logged Cassin's Vireos. Small Mountain Bluebird flocks were observed in the outer Mission District, SF, on Dec. 8 (ST); southwest of NAP, NAP beginning Dec. 21 (MB; mob); and east of Patterson Pass, ALA, beginning Jan. 19 (BM; mob).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Overwintering warbler reports included 2 Tennessee, 2 Nashville, 1 Lucy's, 1 Yellow, 1 Black-throated Gray, 4 Hermit, 9 Palm, and 2 Wilson's Warblers; 1 American Redstart; and 2 Northern Waterthrush. A male Summer Tanager posed for pictures in the Berkeley Hills, ALA, on Jan. 10 (JW; BM). Female Summer Tanagers were noted in Santa Rosa, SON, on Jan. 22–24 (AHa) and at Coyote Pt. CP, SM, on the 26th (RT).

The Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow at Palo Alto Baylands, SCL, put in high tide appearances on Dec. 21 and Jan. 21 (PK, RK; mob). Christmas brought a Harris's Sparrow to a Santa Rosa yard (DK), and New Year's Eve brought another to Montara, SM (RT). Beginning Dec. 16, a Lapland Longspur joined the Horned Lark flock at Hayward RS, ALA (SG; mob). An Evening Grosbeak joined a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a feeder in Forest Knolls on the 4th (DDS). On Dec. 15, Crystal Springs CBC counters found 3 more Evening Grosbeaks at Pilarcitos Cr., SM (fide ADM).

See Birding Observations for more information on the birding community.

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "oob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater for assistance in compiling data.

Abbreviations for Observers: ADM, Al DeMartini; AE, Al Eisner; AHa, Ann Harwood, AHo, Alan Hopkins; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo, BB, Betty Burridge; BM, Bruce Mast, BP, Bob Power; CK, Curtis Kendall; CW, Chuck Woodrum; DDS, Dave DeSantes, DK, Don Kirker, DM, Dominik Mosur; DR, Dorothy Reinhardt; DW, Dave Weber; FO, Frances Oliver, GD, Gary Deghi; GMC, Guy McCaskie; HC, Hugh Cotter; JC, Josiah Clark; JH, Joan Humphrey; JL, John Luther; JMi, Jeff Miller; JMo, Joe Morlan; JR, Jennifer Rycenga; JW, Jonathan Wheatley; KG, Kimball Garrett, KHa, Keith Hansen; KH0, Kirsten Holmquist; KP, Kathy Parker; MB, Murray Berner; MM, Mike Mammoser; MRi, Matt Ricketts; MRo, Mike Rogers; MZ, Matt Zlatunich; PC, Peter Colasanti; PK, Pat Kenny; PL, Peter Leveque; PM, Peggy Macres; RC, Rich Cimino; RJ, Richard Jeffers; RK, Roland Kenner; RM, Roger Muskat, RR, Ruth Rudesill; RS, Rich Stallcup; RT, Ron Thorn; SC, Susan Colletta; SG, Steve Glover; SR, Steve Rottenborn; ST, Steve Tucker

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; CBC, Christmas Bird Count, CC, Contra Costa; CP, County Park, Cr., Creek; Cyn., Canyon; DENWR, Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge; EEC, Environmental Education Center, GGP, Golden Gate Park; IBRRC, International Bird Rescue Research Center; L, Lake; MRN, Marin; Mt., Mount; N., North; NAP, Napa; NWR, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; PRBO, Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory; PRNS, Pt. Reyes National Seashore; Pt., Point; Rd., Road; Res., Reservoir; RP, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S., South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SFBBO, SF Bay Bird Observatory; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park, SR, State Reserve



CLASSES

Golden Gate Audubon is sponsoring six natural history classes through the Albany Adult School, 601 San Gabriel Avenue, Albany. You can register online at <http://albany.k12.ca.us/adult/>. You can also sign up in person. Call 510.559.6580 for more information. Many classes have a maximum enrollment, so don't wait to register!

East Bay Wildflowers: Identification and Conservation

Lech Naumovich

April 1 – April 22 and May 6, plus three Saturday field trips, April 5, 13, and 26

Looking to learn to identify some of the East Bay's 1,000 native plants? This five-week course will provide you with a taxonomic tour of our botanical gems. We'll cover about 20 plant families and 200 common, unusual, and rare species that call the East Bay home. \$25 materials fee with recommended text book. Go to www.goldenhour.org for additional information.

Birding Basics

Anne Hoff

Tuesdays, April 1 – 29, 7 – 8 p.m., plus five Saturday field trips, April 5 – May 3

This introduction to birding covers identification, habitats, and use of equipment. Learn to recognize the more common birds of the Bay Area and where to find them.

Birding by Ear I

Denise Wight

Wednesdays, April 2 – April 30 (no class on April 9), 7 – 8:30 p.m., plus four Saturday field trips, April 5, 19, 26, and May 3, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

It's springtime, and the birds are singing! Come learn to identify the birds of the bay area by their song. For more information, visit the instructor's website, www.blkittiwake.com.

Birding by Ear II

Denise Wight

Wednesdays, May 14 – June 4, 7 – 8:30 p.m., plus four Saturday field trips, May 17 – June 7, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Birdsongs continue into the late spring with the arrival of late migrants. Broaden your knowledge. For more information, visit the instructor's website, www.blkittiwake.com.

Birds of the Bay Area

Rusty Scalf and Eddie Bartley

Tuesdays, April 15 – May 13, 7 – 8:30 p.m., plus field trips on the Saturday or Sunday following each class. Final trip is a weekend-long trip to the Monterey area.

It's spring! Warblers and vireos arrive, and shorebirds depart. Learn to identify our birds in their colorful breeding plumage.

Join an enthusiastic group on field trips around the Bay Area. For more information, go to www.wingbeats.org.

Birds and Butterflies — Easy Garden Enchantment

Corinne Greenberg

Tuesdays, April 15 – May 6, 7 – 9 p.m., plus one Saturday morning field trip, May 6

Set out a welcome for birds, butterflies, and other beneficial critters, and become captivated by the beauty of native California plants as you learn year-round ecological gardening. Gorgeous slide shows, environmental and natural history, and easy garden management lessons will help you create an enchanting wild-life habitat. Materials fee is \$5, payable to instructor. For more details, go to www.thegardenisateacher.com.

Birding with Joe Morlan

The second sessions of Joe Morlan's three spring classes begin in early April. Endorsed by Golden Gate Audubon, the classes meet from 7 to 9:15 p.m. at Marina Middle School, 3500 Fillmore, San Francisco. Free parking is in the school lot off Bay Street. Slides illustrate all lectures, and the text for all classes is *A Field Guide to Birds of North America*, fifth edition, by the National Geographic Society. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* is recommended as an adjunct text for Ornithology II and III.

Fees are \$140 for each seven-week course; you receive a \$10 discount if you register at least a week early. To enroll online, go to www.evolveww.com/ce.ccsf/, or print out and fax the online registration form. For further information, call 415.561.1860.

Field Ornithology I

Part B (EA105)

Tuesdays, April 1 – May 13

Introduction to birds and birding, combining basic field skills with the study of bird ecology, biology, evolution, and behavior.

Field Ornithology II

Part B (EA115)

Wednesdays, April 2 – May 14

In-depth study of North American water birds, including phalaropes, gulls, and terns.

Field Ornithology III

Part B (EA125)

Thursdays, April 3 – May 15

Land birds, including warblers, tanagers, and sparrows.

Earth Hour Goes Global

Last fall we encouraged members of Golden Gate Audubon to participate in Lights Out by turning off lights and unnecessary power for one hour during the fall migration. The idea has spread and is now a planned event called Earth Hour held throughout the world to bring attention to climate change.

We again encourage Golden Gate Audubon members to turn off lights and unnecessary power for one hour this spring on March 29, starting at 8 p.m. This coincides with the spring migration when birds fly along the Pacific Flyway through the San Francisco Bay

Area. Some birds are listed as threatened or endangered; others are flying long distances from South America to Canada or Alaska. Birds that migrate at night use the stars and moon for navigation, and studies show that artificial light disorients birds, especially nighttime migrants.

If you are interested in helping with this project, please email Golden Gate Audubon's Conservation Committee at Noreen@naturetrip.com. You can learn more about protecting Bay Area resident and migrating birds at www.goldengateaudubon.org.

OAKLAND COUNT from page 1

Lafayette was only the third found in that period. Palm Warblers at Oakland's Middle Harbor Shoreline Park and at Oakland's Estuary Park made this only the fourth year that the species has occurred. Other species observed fewer than 10 times since 1974 included a Brant, two flocks of Surfbirds, and two Lesser Yellowlegs. Birds commonly found in the 1970s but only once in the last 10 years included a Black Scoter seen from the South Boat and a Common Moorhen at the Oakland International Airport. Finally, if beauty alone could raise a bird to species status, number 181 for the day would have been what was dubbed the "beautiful duck" when it appeared on the 2005 Christmas Bird Count: a presumed male Hooded Merganser x Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid, found again on Lake Merritt.

During count week—the period three days on either side of count day—birders found an additional two species: a male Tufted Duck and a Pileated Woodpecker. The duck has been seen on Lake Merritt most of the last 10 years, while the Redwood Regional Park woodpecker eluded detection on count day as it did in 2000 and 2005.

This year, nine regularly occurring species reached record high numbers since 1974 (with asterisked species topping highs set just last year): Blue-winged Teal, Wild Turkey*, Turkey Vulture, Red-tailed Hawk*, Peregrine Falcon*, Black Oystercatcher, Hairy Woodpecker*, American Crow*, and Common Raven*. Wild Turkey numbers have exploded since its first appearance six years ago, and American Crow and Common Raven numbers have risen



Palm Warbler at Estuary Park, Oakland.

Doug Greenberg

steadily in recent years. Highs for the rest of these species, however, probably stem from normal population fluctuations rather than sustained growth.

This year we missed only two regularly occurring species: Redhead and Ruddy Turnstone. The latter is in decline along much of the Pacific Coast and has now been missed on count day four years running. Six regularly occurring species posted record low numbers since 1974: Canvasback, Red-breasted Merganser, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Brown-headed Cowbird, and House Sparrow. In many early years of the period, Canvasback numbers were five to ten times as high as we've seen in recent years. Birders in areas along the bay reported very few oiled birds—and those only lightly oiled—indicating that a month after the *Cosco Busan* oil spill, readily recognizable

avian victims were no longer evident in large numbers within the count circle.

A brief historical note: For the 11th year, Berkeley elementary school science teacher John Poole and students in the Chickadee Club helped count birds in Tilden Regional Park. John estimates that over the years the club has introduced about 1,000 children to birds and to birding, through the Oakland CBC and the other trips he has led. Perhaps for the next count, other birders can invite a youngster to take part in the count—and ensure that he or she enjoys the day.

We thank everyone who contributed to this very enjoyable and successful count. And we invite birders of any and every age to mark their calendars for the next Oakland count: Sunday, December 14, 2008. See you then!

—Dave Quady and Bob Lewis, co-compilers

that they did not believe the companies had reduced raptor mortality by any measurable amount since 2005. The scientists recommended that the wind companies shut down their operations for four months, from November 1 to February 28. November to February represents the height of raptor presence in the Altamont—as well as the period of lowest wind energy generation. (See the December *Gull* for more detail.)

Although the companies are not required to implement all measures recommended by the SRC until November 2009, Golden Gate Audubon was shocked that the companies chose not to shut down for the four winter months. Originally suggested by company representatives as a way to reduce bird deaths with minimal financial impact, the winter shutdown is viewed by the SRC as the companies' primary chance to move toward the settlement's required 50 percent reduction in raptor mortality. The companies did agree to adjust their required two-month shut down to lessen impacts on birds but did not go far enough toward reducing raptor kill.

Moreover, on a December site visit to the Altamont, the SRC discovered many derelict and nonoperating turbines—tur-

bines that were required for removal in 2006. Hundreds of wintering raptors were becoming habituated to the nonoperating turbines, increasing the likelihood of high mortality when the companies resumed operations on January 1. In response to pressure from Golden Gate Audubon, two of the companies—enXco and AES—agreed to keep their turbines off, pending an Audubon-requested mediation. Florida Power and Light, which owns just over half of Altamont's turbines, resumed operations in early January, joined by nonsettling company AWI.

Golden Gate Audubon is now using legal mediation to address the companies' non-compliance with the settlement agreement and their permits and to pressure them to get back on track with the settlement. We remain committed to the main tenets of the settlement agreement—namely, reducing raptor kill significantly at Altamont's old, existing turbines and crafting a collaborative plan to conserve birds and support wind-energy production over the long term.

We are also working closely with the National Audubon Society to improve future wind resource areas by applying the lessons learned at Altamont Pass. Audubon

California spurred the statewide effort to craft voluntary guidelines for siting wind farms in the state, and the state office and Golden Gate Audubon played an important role in pushing to require adequate scientific monitoring both prior to and following construction. National Audubon staff is also working to raise awareness of the issue nationally.

Finally, Golden Gate Audubon is focused on using the solutions forged at Altamont to set a precedent for other wind farms in California and beyond. Despite the companies' current failures, important new science is emerging from the Altamont Pass effort, including information about bird behavior, turbine siting, effective management measures, and the potential of some new turbine technologies to help reduce bird kill.

Although the Altamont Pass bird mortality crisis is often unfairly pitched as an environmental dilemma, it is not a question of "birds versus wind." Rather, it is a question of sound science and responsible business practices.

Visit our website to keep up-to-date on this issue and find out how to get involved.

—Elizabeth Murdock, Executive Director

**WELCOME
NEW
MEMBERS!**

The Gull is the newsletter of the Golden Gate Audubon Society. As a Supporting Member of Golden Gate Audubon, you receive a subscription to *The Gull*, a 10 percent discount on items purchased at our Nature Store, and the satisfaction of supporting local conservation efforts. Local members of the National Audubon Society are encouraged to join Golden Gate Audubon directly. Contact our office at 510.843.2222 for details.

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